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C O N F I D E N T I A L CARACAS 001369

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: CODEL NELSON: GOV REACTIONS TO PRESS STATEMENTS

CLASSIFIED BY: POLITICAL COUNSELOR ABELARDO A. ARIAS FOR  
REASONS 1.4 (D)

1. (U) GOV OFFICIALS REACTED STRONGLY TO REMARKS MADE BY  
SENATOR BILL NELSON (D-FL) TO THE MIAMI HERALD ON APRIL 18TH.  
IN THE INTERVIEW SENATOR NELSON HAD NOTED THAT THE U.S. KNEW  
THAT THE GOV WAS AIDING THE FARC, WAS FAILING TO CONTROL A  
BLACK MARKET IN VENEZUELAN PASSPORTS, AND WAS INTERFERING  
WITH VENEZUELAN'S CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHT TO CONVOKE A RECALL  
REFERENDUM. HE DECLARED THAT THE TIME MAY COME WHEN  
VENEZUELA MAY HAVE TO BE CONSIDERED HOSTILE TO U.S.  
INTERESTS.

2. (U) VICE-PRESIDENT JOSE VICENTE RANGEL SAID THAT MANY  
"CONCEITED" SENATORS COME TO VENEZUELA AS "TOURISTS", AND  
THEN SAY "SILLY THINGS" ABOUT VENEZUELA. HE SAID HE WOULD  
ASK FOR FUTURE OFFICIAL VISITORS TO PASS A LIE-DETECTOR EXAM.  
"WE HAVE NOTHING AGAINST THE NORTH AMERICAN PEOPLE. WE WANT  
TO HAVE SMOOTH, DEMOCRATIC, RESPECTFUL, CIVILIZED RELATIONS  
WITH THE UNITED STATES, BUT THERE IS A GROUP OF NORTH  
AMERICAN LEADERS, MEMBERS OF THE SENATE, WHO ARE EXTREMELY  
IMPERTINENT AND WHEN THEY COME HERE THEY DO WHAT NELSON DID."

3. (U) NATIONAL ASSEMBLY (NA) DEPUTY TAREK WILLIAM SAAB,  
PRESIDENT OF THE NA FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE COMPLAINED,  
"NELSON GIVES ME THE IMPRESSION THAT HE IS A BLABBERMOUTH,  
WHO ARRIVES IN A FOREIGN COUNTRY AND THEN, AFTER A  
SUPERFICIAL VISIT, LODGED IN A 5-STAR HOTEL, HAS THE RIGHT TO  
INSULT US." SAAB SAID NELSON'S COMMENTS DEMONSTRATED "THE  
GROSS INTERFERENCE OF THE UNITED STATES IN OUR COUNTRY." THE  
PRO-CHAVEZ LEGISLATOR SAID, "IT IS THE PRODUCT OF DESPERATION  
TO SEND A SENATOR TO VENEZUELA TO SAY ANY NUMBER OF IDIOCIES  
AND THEN PUBLISH THEM IN THE PRESS ... BUT AT THE SAME TIME  
IT SHOWS THAT WE ARE CORRECT TO THINK THAT THE U.S. HASN'T  
STOPPED PROMOTING DESTABILIZING AND CONSPIRATORIAL ACTIONS  
AGAINST VENEZUELA."

4. (U) REFERRING TO THE SENATOR'S COMMENTS REGARDING LINKS  
TO COLOMBIA'S FARC, THE MFA DECLARED THAT THE REAL DOCUMENTS  
REGARDING TERRORISM SUPPORT WERE THOSE IN POSSESSION OF THE  
STATE DEPARTMENT WHICH "ADMIT THE FINANCING BY THE BUSH  
ADMINISTRATION OF TERRORISTS, COUP-MONGERS, AND FASCISTS WHO  
HAVE ATTACKED VENEZUELAN DEMOCRACY" (REFERS TO FOIA DOCUMENTS  
ON NED FINANCING OF PRO-DEMOCRACY GROUPS). THE MFA GOES ON  
SARCASTICALLY TO ATTACK THE RELIABILITY OF U.S. INTELLIGENCE  
AGENCIES, WHICH WERE "THE SAME ONES WHICH EFFICIENTLY  
DETECTED THE MORTAL ATTACK AGAINST THE TWIN TOWERS IN NEW  
YORK AND WERE THE SAME ONES THAT INVENTED THE FANTASIES ABOUT  
THE EXISTENCE OF WMD IN IRAQ."

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COMMENT

5. (C) THE GOV WAS STUNG BY THE SENATOR'S FRANKNESS -- ERGO  
THEIR SHARP, INTEMPERATE REPLY. THE GOV IS EMBARRASSED,  
SINCE IT HAD ANTICIPATED THAT SENIOR U.S. DEMOCRATIC PARTY  
LEADERS WOULD BE MORE AMENABLE TO THE GOV -- AND THEY WERE  
PROVEN WRONG. FORMER FOREIGN MINISTER CHADERTON TOLD THE  
AMBASSADOR ON APRIL 22 THAT VENEZUELAN AMBASSADOR TO  
WASHINGTON ALVAREZ\_ HAD BEEN OVERCONFIDENT IN HIS DEALINGS  
WITH SENATOR NELSON.  
SHAPIRO

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